

VIRGINIA SLIMS CHARITY TIE-INS

SUMMARY FINDINGS

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The following provides a summary of findings from qualitative research conducted among adult female smokers in Tampa, FL on April 28-29, 1999.

Research Objectives

- To explore adult female smokers' reactions to Virginia Slims providing smokers with the opportunity to participate in contributing to charities
- To understand the level of participation which is of interest to adult female smokers
- To gather response to four proposed concepts, including the relevance of each concept and its fit with the Virginia Slims image

Methodology

Seven mini-groups (6 participants each) were conducted among adult female 100's smokers, as follows:

- Three mini-groups among Virginia Slims smokers (1 mini-group ages 25-34; 2 mini-groups ages 35-44)
- Four mini-groups among competitive brand 100's smokers (2 mini-groups ages 25-29; 2 mini-groups ages 30-39)

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Summary Of Findings

General Issues

That Virginia Slims would provide adult female smokers with an opportunity to contribute to a charity was appealing to Virginia Slims smokers and to some competitive smokers, especially those who have Virginia Slims within their consideration set.

- The idea of charitable contributions was most favorably received by older adult female smokers. Many of these smokers noted that they are familiar with companies which provide this opportunity. Some currently participate in these types of charity tie-ins via the purchase of specific products. Others stated that they support local charitable organizations by donations of clothing, household items, or food.
- Some young adult female smokers also felt that the idea of participating in a charitable cause was of interest. However, some of these smokers viewed the charitable organizations proposed in the concept statements as less personally relevant. And, young adult female smokers were less likely to currently participate in donating to charities.

Adult female smokers felt that the opportunity to contribute to organizations which support women's issues reinforces the heritage of Virginia Slims as "a brand which stands for women." As such, female smokers felt that selecting "women-focused" organizations is consistent with the image of the brand.

- Virginia Slims smokers appreciated the opportunity to "help other women," and felt that this type of program provided positive imagery regarding their brand.
- Competitive smokers who have Virginia Slims in their consideration set felt that the chance to contribute "to a women's cause" may prompt them to purchase Virginia Slims.

Across these groups, female smokers requested specific information regarding the organization and its services, programs, or benefits.

- Female smokers wanted a sense of reassurance that the money donated would be used primarily to help individuals in need, rather than for administrative costs.
- That the organization was "well-known" or in existence for a period of time provided feelings of trust or confidence that the money donated will be appropriately used.
- Many felt that local area tie-ins are highly meaningful, representing a way for smokers to "do some good" in their own community.
- Some suggested that a national organization - with ties to the local community - adds confidence and credibility to the charity.

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Most smokers responded favorably to focusing attention on one organization - rather than donating money to be used for several different causes. Putting "all the effort" into one organization provides the image of being able to "truly make a difference." And, some commented that they would appreciate "progress reports" from Virginia Slims, letting them know the actual benefits gained from smokers' contributions.

Some smokers commented that they would appreciate contributing to several organizations and/or having the option of choosing the organization which was most personally meaningful - if there were sufficient funds available. However, other smokers wondered if the funds would get "spread too thin" if they were donated to a range of causes.

Smokers felt that a program for charitable donations should be available on an "on-going basis." Yet, in discussing the logistics of participation, most smokers seemed to envision that Virginia Slims will be providing the opportunity for smokers to participate during a specified period of time.

Response To Specific Organizations/Funds

Two of the proposed organizations prompted positive reactions among adult female smokers, specifically because these organizations focus on helping women in the United States.

Female smokers tended to personally identify with these organizations and viewed these organizations as assisting women to become self-sufficient and independent. And, each of these organizations is consistent with the Virginia Slims heritage of supporting women's issues.

Dress For Success

Overall, female smokers responded favorably to supporting Dress For Success, commenting that this type of organization fulfills an important need for women. And, the focus on providing work attire for women entering (or re-entering) the work force was felt to be unique.

- Many female smokers felt that the opportunity to help other women touches a personal chord. And, women could easily identify with wanting to help others who may need "a leg up" in bettering their lives.
- Focusing on helping and empowering women who are homeless or victims of domestic violence is highly relevant, given issues within today's society.

Dress For Success was viewed as providing a means for women to become self sufficient via entering the job force. Furthermore, many female smokers felt that the confidence which is gained by "looking one's best" is highly important, especially when an individual is interviewing for a job.

Some female smokers were aware of Dress For Success, having read about this organization in women's magazines and/or having seen reports about this organization on television. For others, Dress For Success brought to mind a local organization for abused women, The Spring, which accepts clothing and other donations to assist women in re-establishing their lives. A few wondered if Dress For Success would be working with this local organization.

Female smokers agreed that Dress For Success reinforces images associated with Virginia Slims. That is, the image linked with Virginia Slims is a woman who is confident, independent, and successful. In addition, the focus on providing appropriate work attire brought to mind the image of Virginia Slims as a woman who is well dressed and career oriented.

Those female smokers who were less impressed by Dress For Success (typically, young adult competitive brand smokers) were likely to comment that they had "made it on their own" rather than relying on support from any organization. Furthermore, some of these young adult female smokers commented that they do not own business attire and therefore do not have appropriate types of clothing to donate to this cause.

Equal Rights Advocates

Female smokers who expressed interest in contributing to Equal Rights Advocates viewed this organization as assisting women who face injustices in the workplace. As such, Equal Rights Advocates was viewed as a means to provide support to women.

- That this organization focuses on issues relevant to women in the United States was highly appealing.
- Some women who are currently employed in non-traditional female jobs and/or who are aware of gender inequality in the workplace personally identified with the service that this organization can provide.
- Others felt that this organization is a "logical extension" to Dress For Success, commenting that once a woman enters the work force she can, potentially, face problems of discrimination.

However, several issues emerged as female smokers discussed the services and benefits offered by Equal Rights Advocates. These issues often interfered with the overall acceptance of the organization.

- Some female smokers had difficulty envisioning exactly what role this organization plays in helping women. These smokers wanted to know specific examples of what the organization does and how it impacts on the day to day lives of women who need assistance.
- Others felt that there are many organizations which provide a means for women to obtain legal assistance and, as such, Equal Rights Advocates was not unique. These women questioned how Equal Rights Advocates is different from Legal Aid or from other organizations/government agencies which protect the legal rights of women and minorities.
- Others commented that the organization seems to be too focused on lawyers. Some commented that there are law firms which take Pro Bono cases and therefore meet this need. These women could not envision contributing to a "group of lawyers."
- Some female smokers objected to the focus on low-income women, noting that many women who are employed in low-paying jobs often need help but are unable to qualify for assistance because they are working.
- For some young adult smokers the name Equal Rights Advocates brings to mind an out-dated issue related to gender differences. These women commented that women in the work force have already achieved a sense of equality.

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- For a few female smokers, Equal Rights Advocates evokes images of an organization which is primarily focused on helping women of color - rather than an organization available to help all women.

Those who responded favorably to Equal Rights Advocates felt that this organization fits with the image of Virginia Slims as "standing up" for women's rights. This organization reinforces the image of a strong, confident, and independent woman in a manner which is relevant today.

Female smokers who were less favorable to the organization (especially young adult competitive brand smokers) agreed that Equal Rights Advocates suggests an image of Virginia Slims as "fighting" for women's rights. However, these smokers were likely to link this organization with the Virginia Slims image of "You've Come A Long Way, Baby" - noting that gender differences and issues of women's rights are a thing of the past.

Adult female smokers rejected the idea of contributing to international organizations.

Responding to these concepts, many female smokers immediately commented that they would rather contribute to organizations which focus efforts on problems faced by women in the United States.

These smokers repeatedly stated that there are "too many problems here at home" which need attention and support. They routinely noted that women in the United States need assistance in dealing with economic issues, issues of homelessness, and issues of domestic violence. Summarizing this reaction, women agreed, "I think we should worry about our country first."

Furthermore, female smokers had difficulty linking international organizations with images of Virginia Slims.

International Development Exchange

Most female smokers had no interest in contributing to a cause focused on helping women in third-world countries. The issues faced by third-world women seem "too far removed" from the day-to-day experiences of women in the United States. And, female smokers had difficulty understanding why they would want to support third-world women, given the number of issues here at home.

Many female smokers did not perceive the International Development Exchange as a means of enhancing the lives of women in third-world countries. The examples which included providing assistance in making arts, crafts, or wares did not suggest a sense of "advancement" for women.

Global Fund For Women

While issues such as literacy, domestic violence, and economic independence are highly relevant to female smokers, the opportunity to contribute to an organization which provides services for women in countries outside of the United States was generally rejected.

That the Global Fund For Women supports over 1,000 groups in 125 countries provides an image of a large organization and, for some, adds to the credibility of the cause. However, many wondered "how much good" could really be done by an organization which had this kind of wide-spread reach.

Female smokers commented that they would rather donate to a cause which seemed to be more focused, rather than to a cause which seemed "vague" or which, perhaps, was "over-extended."

Of note, most female smokers did not feel that reactions to the Global Fund For Women would be different if the United States were one of the 125 countries included in this cause. Again, women commented that they appreciate that all of their donations be directed to women in the United States only.

Level Of Participation

Responding to various options for participating in contributing to charities, adult female smokers generally responded favorably to those which were perceived as "simple" or "easy to do." And, smokers appreciated the opportunity to participate in a charity "without making any special effort."

Specifically:

- Pack purchase

Adult female smokers responded favorably to the idea that a charitable contribution would be made by purchasing Virginia Slims. Most anticipated that "specially marked packs" would be available for a limited amount of time.

Virginia Slims smokers agreed that they would feel good about making a charitable contribution in this way. Competitive brand smokers who have Virginia Slims in their consideration set also felt that they would be likely to participate in this type of program.

- Redeeming specially marked coupons

The opportunity to redeem a coupon and therefore have a per pack/per carton savings plus contribute to a charity was highly appealing to Virginia Slims smokers and to competitive smokers with Virginia Slims in their consideration set.

Some Virginia Slims and competitive brand smokers noted that they are accustomed to receiving Virginia Slims coupons in the mail and anticipated receiving these specially marked coupons in the same manner.

Given the positive response to Dress For Success, the opportunity to donate clothing ("Clean Your Closet Week") was highly appealing.

- Many adult female smokers noted that they currently donate clothing to local causes and therefore view this type of donation as "easy to do."
- However, some smokers raised questions about the logistics of donating clothing to Dress For Success, commenting that they would rather drop off clothing at a conveniently located center, rather than take the time to pack and ship clothing to someplace outside of their area. In addition, some noted that local charities arrange for clothing pick-up at home, simplifying the opportunity to participate.

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- Other components of "Clean Your Closet Week" were of less interest to smokers.
 - Most Virginia Slims and competitive brand smokers rejected the idea of a social event ("Clean Your Closet Ball"). Some smokers felt that the image of a ball was "too up-scale" and therefore not personally relevant. Others noted that given time constraints they are unlikely to participate in any type of event.
 - Furthermore, some smokers felt that money raised by an organization would be "better spent" by donating it directly to the cause than by paying for a social event. These smokers wondered if the expense of the event would limit the amount of money available to those in need.
 - A few smokers expressed interest in a social event, if the event included entertainment which was of interest to them.
 - Tips on closet organizing and wardrobing were also of limited interest. Most smokers did not feel that they would pay attention to this type of information.

Additional ways to participate appealed to some smokers within this sample:

- Returning a response card from a special mailing

Adult female smokers who responded favorably to returning a response card, indicating interest in the cause, felt that this option would require minimal effort.

Importantly, these smokers noted that they would want some type of "reassurance" that a donation had, in fact, been made in their name. An acknowledgment via a thank you card and/or inclusion in future newsletter mailings was appreciated.

Those who were less interested in returning a response card commented that, at times, even returning a self-addressed stamped envelope may be more effort than they want to make - "You mean to send it in, but sometimes you just don't get to it."

And, some expressed limited credibility in this type of participation, wondering if, in fact, a donation will truly be made for each response.

- V-Wear Tie-Ins

Virginia Slims smokers (and some competitive brand smokers with Virginia Slims in their consideration set) who have previously participated in V-Wear Catalogs expressed interest in donating to charities by using pack UPC's - as long as the items in the catalog were appealing and charity was meaningful to them.

Some of these smokers felt that interest in the items would prompt participation in a V-Wear catalog. And, the charitable contribution would reinforce good feelings about ordering.

Some Virginia Slims smokers who currently collect Virginia Slims UPC's felt that the option of using "X" number of UPC's to make a donation would attract their attention, if there were nothing in the catalog of interest to them.

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Notably, while the International Development Exchange prompted limited interest as a cause, some older adult Virginia Slims smokers commented that they may be likely to participate in a V-Wear Catalog featuring items from around the world, if items were appealing. Other smokers had no interest in these types of items.

Competitive brand smokers are less likely to participate in V-Wear offers, given limited interest in Virginia Slims.

- Matching funds

Some adult female smokers appreciated the option of Virginia Slims matching monetary contributions made by smokers. And, for some, this option added a sense of credibility to the charity program.

However, most smokers agreed that they would be more likely to participate in a charity by purchasing a product, redeeming a coupon and/or participating in a V-Wear Catalog than by donating money.

Discussing ways in which smokers would learn about the opportunity to donate to a charity and/or receive information about the charity, the following emerged:

- Given interest in participating in charities via pack purchasing, many felt that they would be likely to learn about a charity option by seeing specially marked Virginia Slims packages and/or by seeing advertising at point of sale.
- In addition, Virginia Slims and competitive brand smokers responded favorably to the idea of receiving information about charity participation via direct mail. Smokers want to have the opportunity to read about the charity and to understand the benefits or services it provides.

Virginia Slims and competitive brand smokers agreed that they would appreciate receiving on-going mailings, detailing the success of a program including specific information regarding how much money had been contributed and the benefits provided to the organization, given these donations.

- Most envisioned receiving newsletters at least twice a year. Some anticipated that these newsletters would be sent on a quarterly basis.
- However, smokers agreed that they do not want to be "inundated" with mailings. Many noted that they would not want to see the charity spend excessive money on mailings - since the money would be better used by contributing to the cause.

While some smokers appreciated the option of mailings which included "something of personal interest" (for instance, general issues related to women), most did not feel that additional information - beyond the specifics regarding the charity - was required.

Responding to additional ways to receive information about a charity, a Web Site was of interest to some smokers, providing a means of reading more details about what the charity does and how its money is allocated.

An 800 number was of limited interest, since adult female smokers agreed that they are more interested in reading information "at their convenience" than in gathering information by phone.